

# Fire victims get a helping hand

» Stephen Selaluke

A local charity organisation has brought the victims of the recent Mhlanga informal settlement shack fires temporary relief.

The residents of the settlement in Mamelodi West section B1 became destitute recently when a fire ravaged their homes.

Last week, Patch Up SA donated food, clothes and water to ease their plight.

Kagiso Mahlangu of Patch Up said the donation was for disaster relief.

She said the shack fire displaced a lot of people.

"We are here to assist with food and

clothes, especially for women and children," said Mahlangu.

"We are appealing to non-profit organisations in the community, government agencies and the community members themselves to come on board and bring a more permanent solution to the living conditions of people in the settlement," she said.

The residents lost their most important possessions such as IDs, birth certificates, furniture and clothing in the fire, after more than 25 shacks caught alight around 03:00 last Wednesday.

Ward 67 councillor, Sizwe Tsiane said he

received calls in the early hours that shacks were on fire in Mhlanga.

He said the emergency service was called and came to put out the fire.

"Fortunately, only 25 out of more than 200 shacks burnt," said Tsiane. He said two people were treated for smoke inhalation.

"We have contacted the Social Development Department to come and assess the situation and to provide temporary shelter. We are also engaging with Home Affairs to help those who lost their IDs and birth certificates," he said.

"Unfortunately, we don't have any other choice but to help rebuild the shacks because many people are unemployed and we can't allow them to stay in churches for more than six months."

Tsiane said rebuilding was a temporary solution with the long-standing solution being to relocate the inhabitants to a decent, dignified place of safety.

Victim and unemployed mother of two children (aged 2 and 7) Joyce Mogola (34) said the donations came at the right time.

She said she had lost everything from furniture to clothes in the fire.

"The donation of clothes, books, and food will help us pick up where we left off, especially for children going to school.

"We are asking for more assistance with clothes and food," she said.

Mahlangu said Patch Up was always ready and willing to reach out and help those in dire need.



Above and left: The fire victims from Mhlanga informal settlement receiving clothes and blankets from Patch Up SA.